

**Open Letter to European Heads of State**  
**from Gavin Oldham**

It is clear that the United Kingdom decision to leave the European Union has come as a great shock to many. As one who felt particularly conflicted by the choice, I have decided to write to you to explain what I understand to be the context and the motives behind our decision, and what we can do together to set us on the right track in future.

The result was not just about migration: it was just as much a vote again economic failure and the sense of powerlessness which comes from the democratic deficit throughout Europe. Migration may have been the touchstone, but we all know that it is the dysfunctionality of Europe's political system which has led to so many people moving from their home countries in the first place.

Let me accept that the problem in Europe, and particularly in the Eurozone, has been partly caused by the United Kingdom. With no directly elected Head of State or executive responsible to the electorate, the civil servants who run the European Commission exercise power without accountability. There is no opportunity for the people of Europe to dismiss these people in power if they don't like the direction of travel. It is like a benevolent but inefficient dictatorship, forever taking decisions which are too little and too late.

The impact is felt hardest on the economy, with GDP growth stagnant and youth unemployment rife. Instead of transferring public works (as would happen in a unified country or federation) from Germany and the Benelux, which are effectively operating at too low an exchange rate, to those countries in the east and south of Europe, whose economies suffer from too high an exchange rate, you have let migration take the strain. So Germany has resorted to opening its doors to migrants from Middle East, while those people from the eastern and southern countries have preferred to come to the United Kingdom. Who can blame them when unemployment for young people runs at over 50%?

Not only is there no directly elected executive or head of state, but also the democratic deficit spreads and deepens with that very migration. A close relative of mine has lived in the United Kingdom for over 20 years. He understandably wishes to retain his German passport, but as a result for the whole of that period he has been denied a vote in General Elections and, indeed, in this recent referendum. There are over 3 million non-UK passport holders from countries in the European Union who are similarly disenfranchised, and this will be multiplied many times over across Europe as people 'enjoy' freedom of movement which in fact is driven by poverty and disadvantage.

Affluent Europeans seem to be totally unaware of these strains, as if freedom of movement is a lifestyle choice rather than a hard and distressing necessity. They can therefore be remarkably unsympathetic to the stress that it causes, not only for the migrants themselves but also for their new neighbours.

This was clear in much of the broadsheet media comment after the vote: for example an article in the Financial Times made reference to bigotry which would deny people the lifestyle choices of freedom of movement.

One of my business colleagues commented as follows:

*"But why are there so many 'ignorant bigots'? Spend a month living in Great Yarmouth, spend a week working on a zero hours contract for Mike Ashley and it becomes understandable. Tell*

*them about the benefits of EU working time directives, of EU funding and employment legislation and they wouldn't recognise any of that. Threaten them with more tax hikes etc., and they have suffered so much already it is irrelevant.*

*They feel cut adrift by globalisation and the 'haves'.*

*Our advert in this week's Private Eye 'Beyond the Referendum' [see below] has it right. There needs to be a democratisation of wealth or this is just the start of the 'have nots' kicking back."*

These are the real strains of poverty and disadvantage which caused so many UK citizens to vote against membership of the European Union. They are also there in most European countries and, if action is not taken quickly, they will break the whole Union apart.

So this whole situation has developed from dysfunctional and undemocratic European leadership which has resulted in economic failure. The economic hardship that has caused has led to migration, which has imported that hardship into so many areas of the United Kingdom: areas that in past circumstances would not have been that stirred by the machinations of the EU.

Now I know that the democratic deficit has been partly caused by us. It was Margaret Thatcher who encouraged expansion of the European Union to encompass the current 28 member countries. While this helped free many eastern European countries from the yoke of the old Soviet Union, it also denied Europe the opportunity to pursue that 'ever closer union': indeed she quite explicitly opposed such a development.

It is fair to say that Britain would never accept federalisation and a directly elected Head of State, but that is what the European Union and particularly the Eurozone needs. So our departure may help you to achieve that United States of Europe, if there can still be found the will in your countries to achieve it.

Politically the relationship that United Kingdom needs to have with the United States of Europe is that which Canada has with the United States of America.

However the problem goes deeper than that, as my colleague referred to in his response. We must, both here in the United Kingdom and in Europe, empower the disadvantaged, particularly the young, by democratising wealth creation.

The advertisement to which he refers is attached. The centrepiece is the chronic disparity in wealth in the United Kingdom, but it is also replicated across the European Union. The scale of wealth polarisation is simply shocking, and when half the population lives on day-to-day subsistence and welfare it is hardly surprising that shocks will appear at the ballot box.

The European model has been to suppress the impact of wealth polarisation with welfare handouts and by removal of democratic rights as people migrate, as I have explained above. If we remain attached to this model the entire carefully constructed European infrastructure will collapse, as we in the United Kingdom have now discovered.

There is another way. It is, for the young, by combining the attainment of life skills with the receipt of financial resources, and for older folk to help provide confidence with money and business. It is to give hope in the place of despair, and to create a more egalitarian form of capitalism. Of course there is a role for welfare, but it should be a safety net: not a placebo for the masses.

I hope we will find a way to establish a new partnership with the European Union, but most of all I do not want to see the gradual collapse of the whole European endeavour. That is why I hope you will use United Kingdom's absence from the table to achieve your 'ever closer union' as a first step. Go first for a directly elected head of state; engage the poor and the disadvantaged in the process and start transferring public works to the areas which need them. Although it may not look like it at present, here in the United Kingdom we want Europe to work.

With best wishes

Gavin Oldham

